ToolGPA

NOVEMBER 2026

Flarum

The Insider's Guide

Free open-source forum software you host yourself



Every plan, grade, refund rule and rival among course and community platforms, read from Flarum's own pages.

Made by Flarum Foundation · checked Nov 13, 2026 · toolgpa.com

2.0
GPA



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Who made this guide, what else is on the site, and how to cite it

ToolGPA put this guide together from Flarum's own pages, its app-store listings and our grades. Every fact in it is on Flarum's page too, where it is kept up to date. Checked Nov 13, 2026.

Welcome

What it is, who it suits, its grades and the ten things to know first

2.0

GPA, above 23 of the 98 other course and community platforms we grade

Flarum is a discussion forum platform written in PHP and released under the MIT license. You install it on your own server, then extend it with bundled and community-built extensions for tags, messages, real-time updates and more. The project is run by volunteers and has no paid plans.

To get you started, here are **8 things to know about Flarum**, taken from its own pages and our grades.

1 **Best for a free forum you host yourself**

Flarum is free forum software under the MIT license with groups, extensions and themes.

2 **It is free**

Flarum has no paid plan at all. The whole software is free under the MIT license; you pay only for your own hosting.

3 **It runs on Web**

Web.

4 **Groups and permissions**

Assign permissions to groups, control member access across categories, and use built-in moderation and flagging.

5 **Extensions**

Hundreds of community-built extensions add features, and bundled ones include Tags, Messages, Realtime, Statistics and Markdown.

6 **Themes and styling**

Change the look through admin settings, install themes, or add custom CSS that applies across the whole forum.

7 **A 2.0 GPA, above 23 of 98**

That is against the other course and community platforms we grade, on value, the free plan, features, ease of use and platforms.

8 **Keep it**

Flarum is free, so making your own would save you nothing.

Flarum at a glance

PRICING Free	FREE PLAN Yes
FREE TRIAL None stated	RUNS ON Web
MADE BY Flarum Foundation	CATEGORY Courses & Communities
OUR GRADE 2.0 GPA, fair	

The report card

Best for a free forum you host yourself

Flarum is free forum software under the MIT license with groups, extensions and themes. You need PHP 8.3 or newer, a database and SSH access, and it has no courses, memberships or payments.

TOOLGPA REPORT CARD — **Flarum** — Graded Nov 13, 2026

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
Value for money	C	Free software, but only if you host it yourself, and hosting is your cost. That puts it in the middle for value.

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENT
Free plan and trial	B	The whole software is free under the MIT license. You pay only for hosting.
Features	C	Forums with groups, permissions, extensions, themes and notifications. It does that smaller job fully, and has no courses, memberships or payments.
Ease of use	D	It needs PHP 8.3 or newer, a database and SSH access, which rules out much shared hosting. No store rating is on record.
Platforms and integrations	C	Web only, with no integrations listed on the vendor pages.
Grade point average		Fair, out of 4.0 **2.0**

An A is worth 4 points, a B 3, a C 2, a D 1 and an F nothing. The GPA is the average of the five.

Who Flarum is for

- ✓ Fits if you can run a server and want a forum you control
- ✓ Works for communities that want extensions and themes

Who it is not for

- ✗ Skip it if you can't manage PHP, a database and SSH access
- ✗ Not for you if you want courses, memberships or payments, as it has none
- ✗ Watch out: support comes from the volunteer community forum, not a paid vendor
- ✗ Watch out: no official migration tool, only the third-party Nitro Porter

Good to know

Good for

- ✓ Hobby and open-source communities that want a plain discussion forum
- ✓ Teams comfortable running PHP on their own server
- ✓ Developers who want to write extensions against a documented API

Worth knowing

- ⓘ You run it yourself: the installer needs PHP 8.3 or newer, a supported database and SSH access, which rules out much shared hosting.
- ⓘ No official migration tool; the docs point to Nitro Porter, a third-party import and export tool.
- ⓘ It has no courses, memberships or payment features, only forums.
- ⓘ Support comes from the volunteer community forum rather than a paid vendor.

What it costs

Every plan, the free plan, ways to pay less and how prices have moved

Free

No paid plan at all

Flarum is free to use.

> **Free software, but only if you host it yourself, and hosting is your cost.**
>
> From our grade for value for money

FLARUM

$0

Free MIT-licensed software that you install and run on your own server.

The free plan

The whole software is free under the MIT license; you pay only for your own hosting.

Read from docs.flarum.org on Nov 13, 2026.

What it does

Its main features, where it runs, what it works with and who makes it

1

Place it runs: Web

Free open-source forum software you host yourself. Here is what it does, as its own site describes it, and what it covers: open source, self-hostable, public API, community.

"

Forums with groups, permissions, extensions, themes and notifications.

From our grade for features

Groups and permissions

Assign permissions to groups, control member access across categories, and use built-in moderation and flagging.

Extensions

Hundreds of community-built extensions add features, and bundled ones include Tags, Messages, Realtime, Statistics and Markdown.

Themes and styling

Change the look through admin settings, install themes, or add custom CSS that applies across the whole forum.

Editors

Supports lightweight Markdown editors and full WYSIWYG editors, depending on the extensions you install.

Notifications

In-browser notifications and email digests, with real-time updates available through the bundled Realtime extension.

Choice of database

Flarum 2.0 runs on MySQL, MariaDB, SQLite or PostgreSQL, and search can be swapped to another engine through search drivers.

Where it runs

Web

What it works with

Its own pages name no integrations.

Flarum is made by Flarum Foundation.

PART 04 · STANDING

Where it stands

Its grades against its category, and whether to keep it or make your own

23/98

Other course and community platforms it is graded above

Flarum's GPA of 2.0 is higher than 23 of the 98 other course and community platforms we grade, and level with 21.

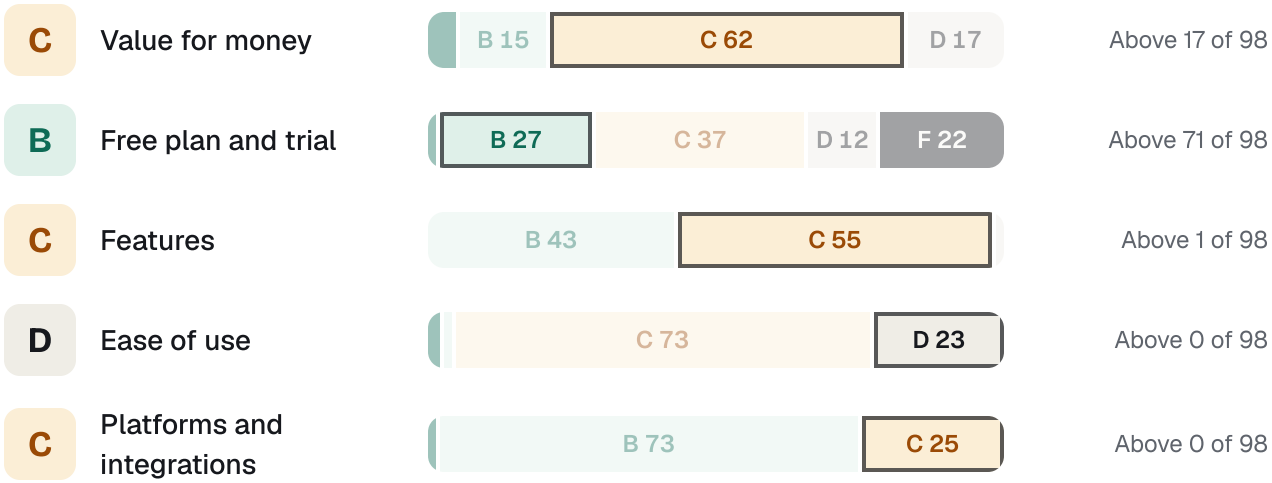
It stands best on free plan and trial (B, above 71 of 98) and worst on ease of use (D, above 0).

Flarum has no paid plan.

On features, ease of use and platforms it scores 1.7 out of 4. Nothing scores higher for less, though at least one tool matches that score at a lower price.

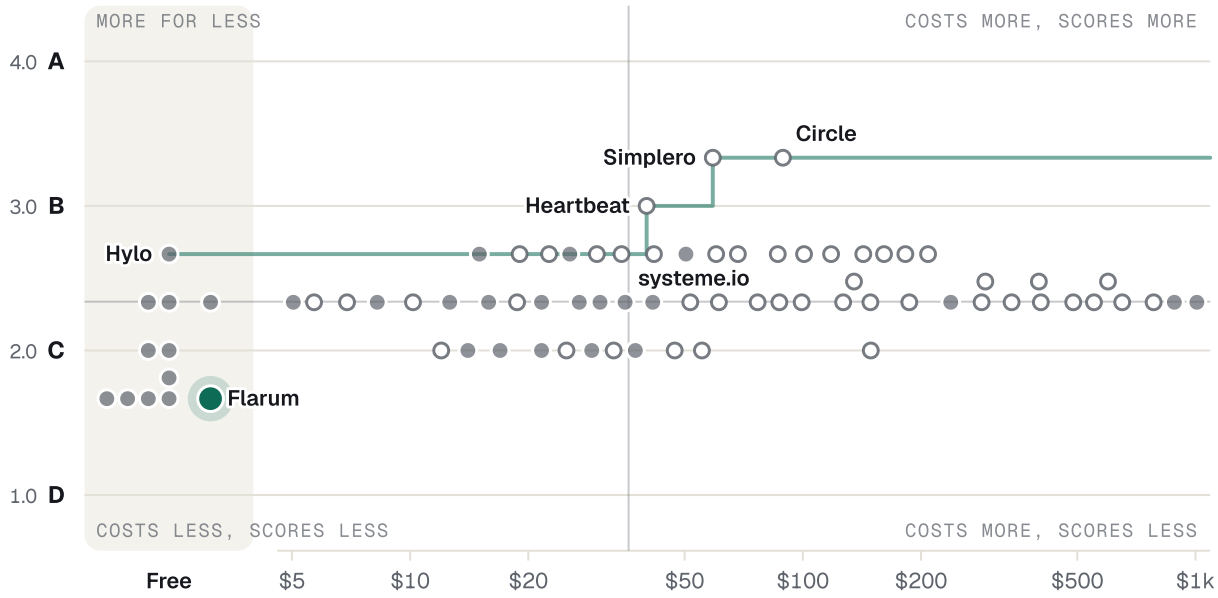
Each grade against the category

Every bar is all 99 course and community platforms we grade, cut by the letter each got. Flarum's own letter is outlined.



Price against what you get

Each dot is one of 78 course and community platforms. Further left costs less; higher up scores better on features, ease of use and platforms. Flarum is the marked dot.



What paid plans start at, a month (each step along is roughly double)

Keep it, or make your own?

Whether this is something you could build for yourself with an AI app builder, and what you would give up.

Keep it

Flarum is free, so making your own would save you nothing.

That makes this kind of software worth paying for, not this one in particular: 54 of the 98 other course and community platforms grade higher.

What you could not

- A members' space with posts, chat and events that people keep coming back to.
- An API that other software can build on.
- What a company asks for before it lets staff use something: roles and permissions.

What this rests on. Flarum's listing: what it does, where it runs, what it plugs into and what it costs. It is a judgement about the kind of software this is. We have not built a replacement for it, and making your own means looking after it too. How we decide, and every tool's verdict.

The alternatives

The tools it is most often weighed against, side by side



Discourse, Vanilla Forums and Bettermode

The 3 tools Flarum is most often weighed against, with where each one differs from it.

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Discourse

Free plan · from $100/mo

Open-source discussion forum software with hosted plans.

- Only Discourse lists iOS and Android apps.
- Flarum is self-hostable, according to its own site.
- Discourse also covers team chat.

Flarum and Discourse compared in full

1.8 GPA

Vanilla Forums

Paid

Customer community software, now sold as Higher Logic Vanilla.

- Flarum has a free plan. Vanilla Forums does not.
- Flarum is open source and self-hostable, according to its own site.
- Vanilla Forums also covers chat assistant, workflow automation and reports.

Flarum and Vanilla Forums compared in full

1.8
GPA

Bettermode

Free trial · from $149/mo

Branded community platform with Q&A, events and AI search.

- Flarum has a free plan. Bettermode does not, though it has a free trial.
- Flarum is open source and self-hostable, according to its own site.
- Bettermode also covers AI search and team chat.

Flarum and Bettermode compared in full

PART 06 · QUESTIONS

Quick answers

The questions people ask about it, each answered in a line or two

12

Questions, each answered in a line or two

The short version of everything above, for when you only need the answer. Each one is told in full in its part of the guide.

Is Flarum free?

Yes. Flarum is free to use.

How much does Flarum cost?

Flarum lists one plan. Flarum: $0.

What platforms does Flarum work on?

Flarum is available on Web.

Does Flarum have an Android app?

No Android app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 13, 2026. Flarum is listed for Web.

Does Flarum have an iPhone app?

No iPhone app was listed when its pages were read on Nov 13, 2026. Flarum is listed for Web.

Is Flarum open source?

Yes. Flarum is open source, according to its own site.

Does Flarum have an API?

Yes. Flarum offers a public API, according to its own site.

Who makes Flarum?

Flarum is made by Flarum Foundation.

What are the alternatives to Flarum?

The closest alternatives to Flarum in our directory are Discourse, Vanilla Forums and Bettermode.

How does Flarum compare with other course and community platforms?

Flarum's GPA of 2.0 is higher than 23 of the 98 other course and community platforms we grade, and level with 21.

Is Flarum good value for money?

ToolGPA grades Flarum C for value for money. Flarum has no paid plan.

Could I make my own version of Flarum?

Flarum is free, so making your own would save you nothing. That makes this kind of software worth paying for, not this one in particular: 54 of the 98 other course and community platforms grade higher.

Where this guide comes from

The prices, plans, platforms and features were read from Flarum's own pages on Nov 13, 2026, and the grades were given on Nov 13, 2026. Graded from this listing, whose facts were read from Flarum Foundation's own pages on 13 November 2026. Not based on using the product, and shorter than our full reviews.

Every tool we list gets five grades, A to F, each with its reason, and a GPA that averages them. How each is decided is at toolgpa.com/grades. This guide is ToolGPA's own work; it is not made, paid for or approved by Flarum Foundation. Prices change, so check flarum.org before you buy.

flarum.org/
docs.flarum.org/install
docs.flarum.org/
docs.flarum.org/faq

PART 07 · ABOUT

About ToolGPA

Who made this guide, what else is on the site, and how to cite it

7,721

Tools graded, in 95 categories

ToolGPA grades software the way a school report grades a pupil: five subjects, a letter for each with the reason written beside it, and a GPA that averages them. Prices, plans and platforms are read from each maker's own pages and dated, so you always know how fresh a figure is.

Every grade, review and ranking on ToolGPA is our own judgement. No company can pay for a grade or change one. Every tool on the site has a guide like this one, free to download and pass on. It all lives at toolgpa.com.

7,721	95	739	579
tools graded	categories	price changes on record	apps priced in 12 countries

What else is on toolgpa.com

Flarum, kept up to date

Everything in this guide, with prices and grades as they are today

toolgpa.com/tools/flarum

How grades are given

The rules behind every letter and every GPA

toolgpa.com/grades

Value charts

What each tool costs against what it scores, for every category

toolgpa.com/charts

Compare

Any two tools side by side, plan by plan

toolgpa.com/compare

Price changes

Every price rise and cut on record, each with its source

toolgpa.com/price-changes

Prices by country

What apps cost on the App Store in 12 countries

toolgpa.com/prices-by-country

Pay less

Every public discount: yearly billing, students, nonprofits

toolgpa.com/save

Keep or make

Which tools are worth paying for, and which you could build yourself

toolgpa.com/keep-or-make

Scan for the live page

Prices and grades as they are today

Quoting this guide?

Please name ToolGPA and link to the live page, so readers can check the figures for themselves:

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ToolGPA, "Flarum: The Insider's Guide",
checked Nov 13, 2026.
https://toolgpa.com/tools/flarum
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Know someone choosing between course and community platforms?

Send them this guide: toolgpa.com/tools/flarum/guide

ToolGPA elsewhere: youtube.com/@toolgpa

See our other guides

The best-graded course and community platforms after Flarum, each with an Insider's Guide of its own.

Courses & Communities Insider's Guide

Every one of the 99 course and community platforms we grade, compared

Hylo Insider's Guide

Free open-source platform for community groups and coordination

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Academy LMS Insider's Guide

WordPress LMS plugin with a free core and Pro licenses by site count

2.8 GPA

Circle Insider's Guide

Community platform with courses, events, payments and branded apps

2.8 GPA

ToolGPA

Choosing software? Every tool graded, every price dated.

Compare tools at toolgpa.com ›

Everything in this guide is ToolGPA's own summary of what Flarum's pages, its app-store listings and public reviews said on the dates shown. Grades are our judgement under the rules at toolgpa.com/grades. Every grade, review and ranking on ToolGPA is our own judgement. No company can pay for a grade or change one. Flarum is a trademark of its owner, and this guide is not made, paid for or approved by Flarum Foundation. Prices and plans change: check flarum.org before you buy.